scientiousness, and quaint organisation in the matters of time and step. The summit is reached near Inoso and Lezama, and from here the line curves rapidly round the basin of the mountains, with a most tremendous sweep of nine miles, until, two stations farther on, it arrives at a point only a few hundred yards distant from the commencement of its downward career. Then some other works of man, in the shape of clearings and minings and general uprootings of the earth's surface, supervene, and the great iron-producing region of Bilbao declares itself.

Not that there is any evil overshadowing of the town. Bilbao banishes all smudginess to her dependencies even more successfully than Barcelona does, and is as trim and bright and pure-aired as an enlightened civilisation, a fine position, and the neighbourhood of the Atlantic can make it. Two or three days may be very happily spent here—in either of the comfortable fondas of Antonia or Inglaterra—before going on, by way of Santander, to Oviedo. There is a pleasant English orderliness in the ways of the place; the scenery of the surrounding hills is most charming; while the narrow old streets—very quaint in their narrowness and oldness, even while beautifully wholesome, bright and busy—yield no lack of interest and picturesque life. Then, for those who care for the latest developments of technical industry, there is the ship-laden river, with its huge building and repairing yards, its ironworks and blast furnaces; or the little honey-

combed world of mines, which has sprung into existence within the last fifteen years, with its network of delicate, aerial tramways spanning the valleys like a multiplied system of telegraph wires.

For a place, too, which makes no claim to architectural distinction, there are many isolated bits and buildings which may legitimately command admiration; and some of which, moreover, establish the fact that Spanish architects of to-day can do really valuable work when they like, or when they are not hindered. The finest of all the greater, public, buildings is the church of Santiago, originally a fifteenth-century erection, and restored in very pretty, if impure, Gothic. It has nave and side aisles, with recessed chapels, transepts and a very deep apsidal chancel, the best features being the graceful arrangement of the nave columns, with a simple groining springing out of the small engaged shafts, and the Capilla Mayor, which is set well forward in the apse, with a broad and open ambulatory surrounding it. There is a considerable amount of poor detail, of course—notably in the side chapels and the weak management of the eastern aisle vaulting; still, upon the whole, the church is highly effective, and all the more deserving of a word of praise because in a land where nearly all the good work belongs to a past age.

There are two diligences each day between Bilbao and Santander, one starting at 6 A.M. and the other at 9 P.M. It is a pity to take the evening coach if it

can be avoided, for thereby one misses all the splendid scenery between Castro and Laredo. For the first ten miles or so the road lies through the hilly, iron-stained-and-spoiled district of Ortuella and Somorrostro, and is only to be enlivened by such marvellous tales of one's Spanish fellow-passengers as have helped to raise the petty Carlist wars of ten and fifty years ago into great and heroically sustained campaigns. But then come twenty miles of scenery such as one is only accustomed to dream of—mountain slopes, now richly endowed with foliage, now clad only with short-cropped turf and dainty flowers, a grand coast-line split up into rocks, headlands, and coves where white villages lie nestling upon the yellow sands; over all a deep blue sky, and at one's feet continually the answering blue of the ocean, with its long lines of crested breakers. At Laredo we bid adieu for a while to the coast, and turn inland for twenty-five miles, by Gama, Hoznayo and Solares, to Santander, just getting a last delicious peep of the sea, with Santoña sleeping at the foot of its Gibraltar-like headland, as we are ferried across the Pasaje de Treto, on a rickety old *lancha* that is a picture in itself.

As, necessarily, in most matters of detail, so even in main routes and conveyances the guide-books are desperately misleading in these unbeaten north-western provinces. The only way to ensure comfort, with the compassing of one's designs, is to be in no special hurry, and to make most diligent inquiries at the various

coach-offices of the principal towns. The erring, unfortunately, is always upon the sanguine side—the setting forth of *carreteras, caminos reales,* and diligences, when as yet such things only exist *in posse,* upon paper, or in the archives of some lumbering Ayuntamiento. Thus, there is no coach-route, or even completed road, between Cangas de Onis and Santander, and so, if one desires to explore the Picos de Europa, and then traverse the romantically and historically interesting district of Covadonga, the only plan is to take coach or carriage to Panes, or Potes, and then to ride or walk across country to Cabrales upon the Oviedo and Cangas coach-road. For our present purposes, however, it will be sufficient to take the well-established diligence route running along the coast as far as Rivadesella, and then turning inland, along the right bank of the lovely Sella river, by way of Arriondas and Infiesto to Oviedo. It is a long, twenty-five hours' journey—from eight o'clock one morning to nine o'clock the next—but the surpassingly fine surroundings bring unfailing interest and refreshment. At Llanes, in the evening, a halt of three hours is made, and, while they are preparing a not-to-be-despised supper in the Parador de las Diligencias, we may stroll through the winding, and so strangely-ordered streets of the little town, to take a look at its picturesque old Parroquia. It would be a very fine Transition church, if only the friable stone of which it is built had not so crumbled away (a rare thing to find in good old Spanish work!) that the

delicacy and life of the Romanesque decoration have quite gone. The most remarkable bits are the great round-arched and recessed portals of the south and west entrances,—the latter placed, not in the centre, as usual, but at the south-west angle. The capitals of the engaged jamb shafts are formed, in the case of the western portal, of grotesque heads of kings and warriors, and in that of the south by crouching lions, one figure serving here, with the oddest effect, to crown two shafts.

There is an ancient Latin-Spanish saying, containing a great deal of accurate description, which runs as follows :—

> Dives Toletana, sancta Ovetensis,
> Pulchra Leonina, fortis Salamantina.

It is chiefly the eloquence of its silence which makes the proverb so admirable. Certainly it would be hard to find much of satisfaction in Oviedo Cathedral save in its holiness. But holy it is, pre-eminently. It was founded by one of the holiest of Spanish monarchs, Alonso El Casto. It shares with Barcelona the patronage of Santa Eulalia, the 'Well-speaking.' It was chosen by Heaven as the final depository of the greatest array of holy relics vouchsafed to any religious community; while the efficacy of these "marvels of God" is so great that a visit to them at a particular season of the year may form the complement of that true faith which without works is dead, and procure immunity from all the pains and penalties which a future state may have

in store for one. For when Cosdroes King of Persia sacked Jerusalem, there was carried away from the holy city, by miraculous means, an ark, of incorruptible wood, filled with all the sacred relics which had there been preserved. After trying various parts of Africa, Cartagena, Sevilla and Toledo, in a vain endeavour to discover a worthy resting-place, this chest finally settled down contentedly at Oviedo, and, being opened, was found to contain, besides an innumerable host of such ordinary relics as the bones of prophets, apostles, saints and martyrs, an array of specialties which it is wearying only to think of. There was our Lord's shroud and tunic, a handkerchief stained with His blood, His swaddling clothes, a large portion of His cross, eight thorns from His crown, the rod which the Jews placed mockingly in His hands, some of the bread of the Last Supper, portions of the manna rained down upon the Israelites, a sample of the milk of the Blessed Virgin, a lock of her hair, various articles of her attire, one of the thirty pieces of money for which Christ was sold, the mantle of the prophet Elias, a knot of Mary Magdalene's hair, the last portion of the earth upon which our Saviour trod, the rod wherewith Moses divided the Red Sea, some pieces of the Tables of the Law given upon Mount Sinai—and, in fact, pretty nearly any object signalised in Sacred or Church history that might be inquired for. Some of these relics have been lost or stolen, but there is still a most marvellous display, which may be inspected any morning at 9.30

A.M., in the Cámera Santa of Alonso El Casto, after going through various proscribed devotions. And there are real works of art here, too—things not quite so venerable perhaps as, say, Saint Peter's slippers, but infinitely more beautiful. There is the silver-plated chest itself; a portable silver altar; two ivory diptychs, and the crosses known as La Cruz de Pelayo, with which that hero overcame the Moors, and La Cruz de los Angeles—all most delicately and artfully wrought, and all certainly a thousand years old.

The Angel's Cross—of the Maltese form, covered with finest filigree work, and enriched with precious stones—came into existence in this wise:—King Alonso was just about completing his Cámera Santa, for the reception of the relics, in the very early days of the ninth century, when, as he was one day returning to his palace, he was accosted by two men, who gave themselves out as goldsmiths, and solicited work. Intent upon the further enrichment of his cathedral, the king caused gold and silver and precious stones to be forthwith given to the strangers, and commanded them to make him a cross. At the expiration of a few hours' time he sent to see if the work was begun, but his messengers found no trace of either labour or labourers, but this jewelled cross, finished as we may behold it now. Then the king knew that he had entertained angels unawares, and blessed God who had vouchsafed thus to set a seal upon his works of devotion.

The relics are worth visiting, not only for their own

wondrous selves, but in order to see the very satisfactory old Transitional chapel in which they are preserved. It is a great pity that King Alonso and his immediate successors were not able to impress the value of their pure and beautiful work upon the minds of the later generations, who, five hundred years afterwards, preferred to erect their new cathedral in a foreign style of Gothic which they were not able to carry out well; and upon which a still more modern love of display has grafted Churrigueresque and all other manner of poor detail and ornamentation. The cloisters, which open out of the south transept, close by the stairs leading up into the Cámera Santa, are much better, though built at the same time as the cathedral. They remind one very strongly of the cloisters of San Juan at Toledo, and are in the best style of late Gothic, with an arcading upon the outer wall matching the elegant, five-light bays opening into the central garden. The quadripartite groining is simple and good, and the capitals of the massive columns are well carved, with an infinity of figures and foliage. There are some interesting old sepulchres and inscriptions under arches in the outer wall, many of them dating from a time prior to the building of the church.

Time was when this curious old city — once the capital, be it noted, of the kingdoms of Las Asturias, Leon and Castile — must have been most rich in fine monuments and churches. Most of these, however, have long since been swept away, or impoverished, or

hopelessly modernised. Such ancient buildings, for example, as Santullano, San Tirso, and San Pelayo, hardly repay the trouble of an examination, while the elegant and very foreign-Gothic San Francisco, at the edge of the pretty Botanical Gardens, presents only a saddening contrast between its past and its present.*

And yet one may linger on here very happily. The city has fallen, indeed, these seven hundred years or more, from its high political and commercial estate; but the blight of neglect has not been suffered to stamp itself very visibly upon its clean and bright ways, while the railway and diligences innumerable create at any rate the appearance of animation.† It is a place that may very advantageously be made the centre of a host of excursions—to Covadonga, Rivadesella, Gijon, along the coast by Pravia and Canero to Rivadeo, and inland, through the fine reach of country stretching between Trubia and the Alto Puerto, into all the Vierzo district. Upon all these and several other routes there are well-appointed daily diligences—save into the Vierzo, in which direction the coach runs only to Brañas; one can always get sufficiently comfortable quarters for a night or two; while the whole region is rich in spoil for

* This church of San Francisco, by the way, affords one of the few instances in Spain of the inclination of the apsidal Capilla Mayor towards the north.

† Creature comforts, too, are exceptionally well provided for. The time-and-travel-honoured Fonda de Luisa no longer exists—the fair Luisa, herself, is dead—but the Fonda de Manteola is, in every shape and way, an improvement upon it.

the naturalist, sportsman, ecclesiologist or the lover of romantic scenery.

There is one other typical bit of Oviedo which must on no account be passed over. The walk up the Naranco *cuesta* is worth taking, even if one cares nothing for the particular type of the ancient art and life of the city here to be encountered,—just for the sake of finding out what pleasant nooks and corners lie hidden away among the seemingly bare and uninviting hills which form the immediate surrounding of the place. And—if one does care for such things—Santa Maria de Naranco presents the very finest example of a great number of most imperfectly known and ancient Christian temples which dot all the face of this north-western country, and which, even after manifold experiences elsewhere, come upon one as a fresh revelation of good and beautiful work. Their name is legion, but these twin churches of San Miguel de Liño and Santa Maria, upon the Naranco hill, are the two most characteristic specimens. Such Spanish critics as have bestowed any care upon the subject—Parecisa, Jovellanos, and others—give the date of Santa Maria as the ninth century, and assume that it was originally a palace of King Ramiro I., converted into a Christian sanctuary. But both design and detail seem, upon examination, to be too thoroughly ecclesiastical in character to admit of this conversion theory; while the real foundation seems thrown very much farther back by a remarkable inscription lately discovered upon the altar *mayor*, from which it appears that the

church, "*nimia vetustate consumptum*," was rebuilt, as a church, in the year 848, by King Ranimirus and his wife.

The exterior is plain and massive, with heavy buttresses, and deep eaves. The entrance—the only entrance now—is by a very slightly pointed door-way on the north side, later, apparently, than the rest of the edifice, with round and chamfered mouldings, and rude tooth-ornament. The porch is waggon-vaulted, with a couple of heavy ribs, engaged columns and Byzantine capitals. The interior also is waggon-vaulted, with very strongly pronounced ribs resting upon corbels, and consists of a single nave, about 35 feet long and 15 feet wide, with a chamber at each end—the Coro at the west, the Capilla Mayor upon the east. These chambers—or Tribunes—are quite Moorish in character, and are separated from the nave by three round arches. The Coro is raised above the nave flooring by three steps, the Capilla Mayor by one, and the former is lit by a very lovely three-light ajimez window. An engaged, round-arched arcading, of three bays, runs along the north and south walls of the nave with twisted columns, and capitals well carved with animals, figures and foliage.

And all is in such beautiful order—all so untouched! It is impossible for any one who has been accustomed at home to unearth, and gloat over, here a single stone, there a pillar, boasting of some sort of mediæval history, to picture the delight of coming face to face with such a perfect and consistent piece of work as this—in its

essential parts over a thousand years old, combining all the highest forms of art known in its day, and still fresh withal, and serviceable.

Below the floor of the nave there is a rude, semi-circular stone vault, usually supposed to have been the crypt, and used only as a pantheon. There is really no evidence of such a purpose, however, while, from sundry ancient documents, ordaining masses to be said "in the lower church," the place would seem to have been a second and well-recognised sanctuary.

After completing our investigations at Santa Maria, the courteous and pleasantly enthusiastic *cura*, to whom all honour is due for his jealous care of the treasures committed to him, will take us to the neighbouring, and only slightly less valuable church of San Miguel de Liño. It lies but a few minutes' walk up the glen, and so witnesses to the truth of the assertion that in Don Ramiro's day all the hillside was thickly populated, and did perhaps boast of the king's palace among its buildings. San Miguel de Liño is equivalent to San Miguel de la Cruz—*liño*, or *leño*, being a recognised synonym for the Cross. And it is, in fact, cruciform, with a lofty central lantern, a single, waggon-vaulted nave, and a Capilla Mayor which is upon a lower level than the rest of the church. Much of both design and ornamentation here is Moorish—the capitals and bases of the columns at the four angles of the Crossing, and the beautiful windows of the transepts and west end. The shafts of the great, western, portal

are covered with quaint and very rude early Christian carvings, consisting apparently of scenes from the lives of the apostles.

There is another of these ninth-century buildings—Santa Cristina de la Leña—in the Swiss-like valley of Campomanes, some twenty miles down the line to Leon. It is cruciform, like San Miguel, but in all other respects very closely allied to Santa Maria de Naranco, and no less rich in fine Byzantine detail. All this Campomanes valley, together with much of the preceding country, may form a delightful day's excursion from Oviedo. Or it may be visited *en route* for Leon, taking the half-past six train in the morning, and walking over the hills in the late afternoon to Puente de los Fierros, in order to catch the evening express for the south, which does not stop at the little wayside station of Campomanes.

The journey over the Asturian Mountains, from Oviedo to Leon, only a little more than seventy miles, used to be a most formidable undertaking. And even of late years, while the tremendous Pájares peaks still separated the advanced posts of the railway—Puente de los Fierros on the north section, and Busdongo on the south—it constituted a very fair day's work. The mountain is now pierced by a series of tunnels rivalling those of the St. Gothard route in their gradients and corkscrewings, and the journey may be accomplished comfortably in six hours. Yet one misses the never-to-be-forgotten three hours' climb, behind a team

of sixteen or eighteen mules, up to La Perucca—over the rent mountain-side, with ranges of snow-capped peaks always above one, and, below, great slopes of timber and grass land dipping down into the far-off valleys. What the passage must have been in winter might be imagined from the twelve-foot high pillars, set up at intervals to mark the whereabouts of the road. The railway emerges for a few hundred yards at the top—nearly four thousand feet above the plain—just where a stone marks the division between Las Asturias and Leon. Then it leaves the old coach-road, and sweeps away, by a more gentle gradient, down to Busdongo, and so through the magnificent Puerto de Pájares to the green and level plain of Leon.

XX.

LEON AND SANTIAGO.

Of all Spain's lordly cities Leon is perhaps the least interesting to the ordinary traveller. It seems hard to pass any such verdict upon it, having regard to its great past, to its present possibilities, and to promised rehabilitation. Yet it is the naked truth, and one is all the more inclined to be outspoken because the life of the place to-day is so poor an exposition of its capabilities. It cannot help being set down in the midst of a flat, bare, featureless country, or being called upon to pay for past sins by rebuilding its cathedral; but it need not have destroyed nearly all its beautiful bits, nor yet wear the dirty, poverty-stricken appearance which it does. And it might possess a decent fonda. As matters stand, each year sees the city a little more dull and stagnant and listless, the cathedral a little farther, and more hopelessly, away from completion, and the Fonda Suiza with a few more paper patches upon its glass doors and windows.

They have been rebuilding their great Santa Maria de Regla for twenty years past, and, though the shell is nearly completed, it will take the little band of forty

workmen now employed upon the work in a listless, truly Leonese fashion, quite another ten years to finish the whole. The city will then, and for the space of four, or perhaps five, hundred years, possess one of the most superb pieces of Gothic work in the world. The architects know—are quite free to confess—that they are repeating the mistakes of too daring lightness, and airiness of construction, first made six hundred years ago; but where can there be found a Spaniard of the nineteenth century who cares particularly about to-morrow, so long as he can produce a grand effect to-day? And, inasmuch as the new work is manifestly inferior to the former more conscientious and pains-taking style of building, it is not at all probable that the life of the resuscitated Santa Maria will stretch to the limits of her late career.

It is a pity, for it is a wonderfully beautiful cathedral. Not solemnising, perhaps, or impressive, like the other great Spanish churches. It is so exactly French in style and design that one might very easily imagine oneself, at entering, to be in Normandy, Picardy or Touraine. And, like the French types of which the church is so manifestly a reproduction, it has the appearance of having gone through centuries of eventful life without being either the better or the worse for it. Then, too, the proportions are not all that one could wish;—the length does not answer to the width and height and fairy-like construction, nor the main arches to the superincumbent surface which they have

to sustain. Nevertheless, the lines are all exquisitely graceful and harmonious; the simplicity of plan is well preserved, and the place is endowed from end to end with fairest and most diverse gems of art work. Such are the inexhaustibly rich and delicate west portals; such the whole of the south transept façade, the north transept doorway, all the window traceries, the carving of some of the monuments, and the *silleria* of the Coro.

As an instance of the recklessness with which the original fault of the too great piercing of the walls is being adhered to—an acknowledged error which presently necessitated the building-up of all the outer lights—it is curious to note that the clerestory and triforium, as they are carried round the choir and chevet, are being restored to their original design of six lights, so leaving actually nothing but a clustered shaft to carry the groining!

The Colegiata of San Isidoro, or Del Doctor de las Españas, dating back a couple of centuries before Bishop Manrique's cathedral, is in some respects the more interesting building of the two. There are most wondrous traditions and associations hanging about its foundation. It owes its rebuilding and rebaptizing, in the eleventh century, to a miracle wrought by the body of San Isidoro, and its title of El Real to its royal patrons, Ferdinand I. and the Doña Sancha—the first wearers of the joint crowns of Castile and Leon. This San Isidoro, be it noted, was not the ploughboy saint

who distinguished himself in the Christian cause upon the plains of Las Navas de Tolosa, but an earlier, seventh-century light of the Church, sometime Archbishop of Sevilla. In such high esteem has this royal church been ever held that it possesses the privilege of a continual exhibition (*manifestacion*) of the Host, which is usually, of course, kept within the tabernacle, save during the Cuarenta Horas.

With anticipations whetted by the exquisite south portal, the no less beautiful façade of the south transept, and the adjoining apsidal chapel—all instinct with finest Romanesque detail—one advances into the church expecting to find here a great treat, and is proportionately disappointed at having to run the gauntlet of all manner of latter-day alterations and defacements. The original chevet, which undoubtedly corresponded in character with the lovely little Romanesque chapel already noticed as terminating the southern aisle, has been replaced by a Gothic chancel, as poor and characterless within as it is without; and much of the same sort of alteration has been carried out in patchwork fashion elsewhere. Then the plain waggon vault of the nave, continued right up to the Capilla Mayor, gives a crushingly heavy appearance to the whole place; while the hand of the painter has been kept terribly busy in every corner. The most satisfactory portions—and they are thoroughly good—are the single-light, Romanesque, clerestory windows, with their pretty chessboard-like string course and arch decoration, the rich carving of all the capitals, and the

small, vaulted chamber of Santa Catalina, which opens out of the church on the west.

This Santa Catalina sanctuary, or pantheon, was perhaps the original chapel built by Ferdinand I. for the reception of San Isidoro's body, and for many ages it was the burial-place of the kings and queens of Leon and Castile. It is very massive in construction, with a good deal of remarkably rude carving upon the capitals of the four cylindrical columns which support the roof, and with a further adornment by some of the earliest frescoes to be met with in Spain. They would seem to belong to the end of the twelfth century, and represent the four Evangelists, in symbol, surrounding our Lord, the Slaughter of the Innocents, the Signs of the Zodiac, the months of the year curiously personified, and a variety of Apocalyptic visions.

But, treading the drowsy, grass-grown ways of such priest-ridden and decayed cities as Leon, Segovia or Avila, where every third passer-by seems to be an ecclesiastic, one gets heartily sick of the very thought of church or convent. How all this disproportion between the means and the end, and this great army of idlers, must have ever weighed upon the poorer, hard-working folk, and thrust back all possibility of the community's progress and rise! Perhaps they effected something by their long prayers—but neither their history nor their home can show it. Yet there is little else than church or convent to think about. The streets are devoid of characteristic life and colour;

there is little of distinctive costume to be seen—save upon festival occasions, when the *charros* and *charras* throng into the town, with faces and actions at woeful variance with their gaudy attire; the old houses of the mediæval nobility have been allowed to rot into insignificance—even such monuments as the *casa solar* where Guzman El Bueno was born—and the walls and gates are the poorest of their class in all the land.

This lack of reverence for her domestic records which the city has shown is all the more grievous because she can boast of so long a roll of distinguished names. Many of these, besides Guzman El Bueno, we have met with in other parts of the Peninsula. There was the martyred San Marcelo, who went out from here, one of the earliest missionaries of the Church. The great Condestable Alvaro de Luna, and his sometime follower, afterwards relentless foe, Suero de Quiñones, who gained his greatest renown at the *Paso Honroso* of the Bridge of Órbigo,* have their earliest memorials in Leon. Following these came the Ponces, who made great names in both Church and State, and one of whom—Ponce de Leon, as he is usually called—was so foremost a figure at the siege of Granada. And then there was the great Arfe family, artists all, whose most distinguished scion, Juan de Arfe, carved the great silver Custodias at Valladolid, Avila, Sevilla and Burgos.

* The sword of this hero, wherewith, at Órbigo, he engaged in single combat with all the knights who passed, during a period of ten days, to the great jubilee at Santiago, is still preserved in the Armeria Real of Madrid.